

# 01—INTRODUCTION: OVERLAPPING TERRAINS

JAMES D. PROCTOR

“Well?” said the geographer expectantly.

“Oh, where I live,” said the little prince, “it is not very interesting. It is all so small. I have three volcanoes. Two volcanoes are active and the other is extinct. But one never knows.”

“One never knows,” said the geographer.

“I have also a flower.”

“We do not record flowers,” said the geographer.

“Why is that? The flower is the most beautiful thing on my planet!”

“We do not record them,” said the geographer, “because they are ephemeral.”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 1943: 53-54)

## GEOGRAPHY? ETHICS?

If geography were accurately represented by the man the Little Prince encountered on the sixth planet of his galactic journey, if indeed the one thing the child cared most about meant nothing to the geographer, then this volume would never have come to be. I grew up, as perhaps did many readers, with a sense of geography as the one subject most to be avoided. “A geographer,” the man of the sixth planet explained to the Little Prince, “is a scholar who knows the location of all the seas, rivers, towns, mountains, and deserts,” or, to quote from a t-shirt I have stuffed in my drawer, “Geography is where it’s at.” This is not the subject matter most of us would consider to be extremely compelling, intellectually, morally, or otherwise, and thank goodness there is more to say from the perspective of geography than that location counts.

This volume is dedicated to what geographers have to say about ethics—another field of intellectual inquiry ripe with potential for misconstrual. Ethics is often held to be a hopelessly abstract and speculative field, one as impractical as it is incomprehensible, of interest only to scholars paid to think thoughts bearing little

1 connection to reality outside of the ivory tower. As Peter Singer argues in his preface to  
2 a recent multiauthored overview of the subject:

3 It is vital that ethics not be treated as something remote, to be studied only by  
4 scholars locked away in universities. Ethics deals with values, with good and  
5 bad, with right and wrong. We cannot avoid involvement in ethics, for what we  
6 do—and what we don't do—is always a possible subject of ethical evaluation.

7 Anyone who thinks about what he or she ought to do is, consciously or  
8 unconsciously, involved in ethics (Singer 1993: v).

9 If ethics is not necessarily limited to intellectual abstraction on the one hand, neither  
10 is it necessarily dominated by moral evangelism on the other. The very term “ethics”  
11 conjures up for many the specter of strident declarations of right and wrong, of facile  
12 moral judgment, or even worse, of cloaking the realms of power in moral drapery, as  
13 charged by Marx in his famous dismissal of morality as ideology (Wood 1993).

14 This volume speaks to the possibility of creating a space for ethics somewhere other  
15 than that inhabited by the out-of-touch scholar and the “in-your-face” evangelist. Its  
16 motivation lies in the important work geographers are doing that explores ethics from  
17 the diverse perspectives that constitute contemporary geography (for recent reviews,  
18 see Smith 1997; 1998a; Proctor 1998a). The subtitle, Journeys in a Moral Terrain,  
19 suggests both the geographical grounding of these essays and their inherent pluralism:  
20 there is no one journey, no final word possible on the relationship between ethics and  
21 the geography of our lives. Our hope here is that, rather than closing exploration of this  
22 overlapping terrain, something of the richness and relevance of geography and ethics  
23 emerges as an inspiration for further work in this area.

1       The purpose of this brief introduction is to sketch a space for geography and ethics  
2 that minimally avoids the misunderstood identities of each, and ideally suggests  
3 something to the reader of their intimate relation. I will begin with a clarification of  
4 ethics, then propose a conceptual framework for geography and ethics that addresses  
5 the dual nature of geographical practice as ontological project (the realities geographers  
6 seek to elucidate) and epistemological process (the means of knowledge generation by  
7 which geographers represent these realities). I close with an overview of the structure,  
8 emphasis, and limitations of this volume and its eighteen constituent essays.

## 9   **ETHICS**

10       Most people place the term ethics in the same category as values and morality; some  
11 clarification and differentiation of the three may be helpful at the outset. The term  
12 values is the kind of word everyone understands but few have carefully examined. Its  
13 common usage often involves idealistic and static/atomistic connotations—namely,  
14 that values “guide” actions (a form of idealistic reductionism: ideas determine practice)  
15 and that values are things (rather than processes) that exist primarily at the level of  
16 individual persons. Its reputation in social research ranges from its outright ostracism  
17 as the polluter of sound factual knowledge to its elevation in status as the ultimate  
18 determinant of what people believe to be facts (Outhwaite 1993). Nonetheless, in spite  
19 of its problematic tendencies, the term values points to a whole realm of concerns that  
20 somehow never get mentioned in scholarly discourse (as feminists have long reminded  
21 us), often due to their highly personal and political implications, and of course their  
22 assumed polarity with “facts.” For this reason alone I find the term a useful corrective  
23 in an intellectual climate that largely exists in denial of this realm.

1        Morality is often used in a repressive Victorian sense in Western society, implying  
2 sexual taboos and the like; but this is a severely myopic definition. The Latin root of  
3 morality is also found in the word mores, meaning the manner, customs, or conduct of  
4 a particular society. Morality thus refers in a very general sense to standards of conduct  
5 by which human action is judged right or wrong in an absolute sense, or better or worse  
6 in a relative sense. Yet right/wrong or better/worse decisions affect a wide range of  
7 scales in our lives, running for example from deliberations over capital punishment to  
8 decisions concerning how one should dress for the day. The difficulty in weeding out  
9 relatively trivial decisions from the weightier ones leads some philosophers such as  
10 Feldman (1978) to consider morality to be difficult term to bound, though most of us  
11 would accept that matters of prudence and etiquette are different (if only in degree)  
12 from moral matters.

13        Morality concerns the normative sphere of human existence and practice, a term  
14 which (as with values) has been used in a pejorative sense in much twentieth-century  
15 social science. Under the influence of positivism, the realm of the normative has been  
16 unfavorably contrasted with positive knowledge, knowledge gained via dispassionate  
17 empirical observation in the spirit of the natural sciences (Wacquant 1993). This  
18 judgment follows from the original Comtean spirit of positivism, a theory that  
19 knowledge has evolved through earlier theological and metaphysical stages—both  
20 tangled up in unprovable normative speculation—to the contemporary positive stage.  
21 Yet, thankfully, some recent accounts (most significantly, Sayer and Storper 1997) call  
22 for a “normative turn” in social theory and social science, not so much to discard so-  
23 called “positive knowledge” as to shed intellectual light on the values that inform the  
24 object and the process of social inquiry.

1       What, then, is ethics? In science, ethics typically involves reflection upon moral  
2 questions that arise in research, publication, and other professional activities (e.g., NAS  
3 Committee on Science 1995); yet philosophical usage is broader than this prevailing  
4 scientific interpretation. Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is commonly  
5 understood as systematic intellectual reflection on morality in general, or specific moral  
6 concerns in particular. The former can be called theoretical ethics and the latter applied  
7 ethics, though the two are closely related. One realm of applied ethics that has garnered  
8 considerable attention outside of philosophy focuses on professional conduct; thus the  
9 moral questions asked in the fields of science, law, medicine, and business are common  
10 examples of ethical inquiry.

11       Another distinction is typically drawn between descriptive ethics, normative ethics,  
12 and metaethics (though only the latter two are represented in philosophical literature).  
13 The aim of descriptive ethics is to characterize existing moral schemes; this has been an  
14 important feature of, for instance, cultural anthropology, which in so doing has raised  
15 the problem of relativism (Benedict 1934; Geertz 1989). Normative ethics are devoted to  
16 constructing a suitable moral basis to inform human conduct; contemporary examples  
17 include Rawls' theory of justice (Rawls 1971) and, in a quite different approach, the  
18 contrasting ethics of care proposed by feminists building upon psychologist Carol  
19 Gilligan's pioneering work (1982). Metaethics, in distinction, is more an examination of  
20 the characteristics of ethical reasoning or systems of ethics. A classic metaethical  
21 problem, as exemplified in David Hume's is-ought dichotomy (Hume 1978), concerns  
22 the relationship between facts (descriptive statements) and values (normative  
23 statements); this problem has been a major concern of, for instance, 20th century social  
24 theory (O'Neill 1993).

1        Much work in Western ethics is thus derived from the way in which moral  
2 philosophy has developed. For instance, one major theme to which many theoretical  
3 discussions—primarily normative but also metaethical—have returned involves the  
4 relationship between the right and the good. While the right corresponds to a particular  
5 act or intent, the good implies rather the end or justification for a particular act or intent.  
6 These terms are of primary significance in Western ethics in that they correspond to the  
7 two major classes of moral theories: teleological theories such as utilitarianism, where  
8 the good is the primary concern, and deontological theories, where the right becomes a  
9 more paramount concern (for introductory discussion, see Davis 1993: 206ff.; Goodin  
10 1993: 241). Recent developments in Western ethics are many (see, for instance, the  
11 online Ethics Updates site at <http://ethics.acusd.edu>): important examples include  
12 feminist and postmodernist/post-structuralist approaches, which have critically  
13 reexamined, though in important ways also extended, this heritage ( e.g., Benhabib  
14 1992; Bauman 1994). The result is that those interested in ethical reflection have,  
15 perhaps more so than in any previous era, a greatly enriched conceptual vocabulary to  
16 draw upon.

17        This heritage of thought on ethics may sound intellectually formidable; yet ethics is  
18 too important to be left to the moral philosopher. Perhaps the most important step in  
19 doing ethics simply involves asking questions such as “How is it that people say this is  
20 a bad thing?”, of “Why do I feel I am right in doing this?.” This is something we all can  
21 do, whether or not we are versed in virtue theory or Kantian deontology. Many areas  
22 of our lives—our jobs, our hobbies, our family and social relationships—are treated as  
23 ethically unproblematic, and thus gain de facto moral legitimacy (i.e., a thing is right  
24 because it is) precisely because we do not ask the question. In its best sense, then, ethics

1 becomes a practice of consistent (hopefully not neurotic!) moral reflection, turned both  
2 inward and outward.

### 3 THE GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE: A FRAMEWORK

#### 4 **Geography and ethics: Process and substance**

5 The confluence of geography and ethics represents no radical recent turn of events:  
6 one need only go back to Immanuel Kant to find “moral geography” proposed as a  
7 major subdivision of the discipline, focusing on “diverse customs and characteristics of  
8 people of different regions” (May 1970: 263). Yet Kant would never have imagined the  
9 range and depth of philosophical questions geographers have explored in the last  
10 century (Johnston 1986; Livingstone 1992; Buttimer 1993), and geographical engagement  
11 with philosophical issues touching on ethics (e.g., social justice and related  
12 concepts—see Smith 1994; Hay 1995) has grown tremendously in recent decades.

13 A glimpse at contemporary work by geographers on ethics is impressive. Two  
14 examples of recent monographs include David Harvey’s Justice, Nature and the  
15 Geography of Difference (1996), which offers a materialist and geographically-situated  
16 grounding of environmental and political values and attempts a rapprochement of  
17 social justice and environmental concern, and Robert David Sack’s ambitious Homo  
18 Geographicus (1997), which grounds human existence in geography (hence the title)  
19 and ultimately moves toward a geographical framework for morality. Or, consider a  
20 recent issue of Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (volume 15 #1, 1997)  
21 devoted explicitly to the reengagement of social science in general and geography in  
22 particular with moral theory. As examples of the important contributions this issue  
23 makes, Andrew Sayer and Michael Storper argue convincingly for a greater level of  
24 normative self-criticality among geographers and social scientists, given the moral

1 propositions they often unreflectively deploy (Sayer and Storper 1997), and Sarah  
2 Whatmore revisits mainstream approaches to social and environmental ethics, offering  
3 a feminist and geographically-informed relational theory of ethics based on a  
4 reconfiguration of the self (Whatmore 1997). Indeed, an entire journal, Ethics, Place and  
5 Environment, has recently been launched by an international body of geographers,  
6 devoted broadly to geographical and environmental dimensions of ethics.

7       How did this burst of geographical scholarship on ethics arise? One clear antecedent  
8 is a broader interest dating back several decades among geographers on values  
9 (Buttimer 1974), in large part a response to the professed value-neutrality of the  
10 burgeoning quantitative approach in geography, with its emphasis on objectivist spatial  
11 analysis (Billinge, Gregory, and Martin 1984; Cosgrove 1989). Values-based concerns  
12 among geographers have underscored diverse political struggles in the discipline,  
13 including those calling for greater relevance in research (Mitchell and Draper 1982),  
14 more explicitly critical theoretical approaches (e.g., Peet and Thrift 1989), and the  
15 inclusion of women in general, and feminist perspectives in particular, in the practice  
16 and substantive emphasis of geography (Rose 1993).

17       Two paths distinguish geographical engagement with ethics: the first attends to the  
18 process of doing geography and is broadly similar to professional ethics, the second the  
19 substance of geographical inquiry and is more akin to theoretical ethics. These paths are  
20 intimately related, as the former represents the context out of which the content, the  
21 result, of substantive ethics emerges. In this paired approach, geographers point to a  
22 manner of being properly reflexive in the moral statements they make about the world  
23 without getting lost in this reflexivity to the point that they cannot speak anything of  
24 substance.



1        This twofold approach suggests one possible conceptual framework for a  
2 geographical perspective on ethics. As with other academic disciplines, geography is in  
3 large part a knowledge-building enterprise consisting of two major components: its  
4 ontological project and its epistemological process. Geography's ontological project is,  
5 simply, to make sense of those aspects of reality (thus "ontology," a term referring to  
6 being or reality) historically engaged in geographical analysis. Much of geography's  
7 ontological project is bound up in specific metaphors used to organize reality; for  
8 convenience I will adopt the common threesome of space, place, and nature as the  
9 interweaving metaphors informing the geographical imagination (e.g., Gregory 1994:  
10 217). Space is the metaphor underlying a good deal of geography's ontological project,  
11 including emphases as disparate as spatial science and marxist critique. The metaphor  
12 of place is prominent in more humanistic and interpretive work in geography; it speaks  
13 of a reality as lived and understood by active human subjects. The metaphor of nature  
14 underlies physical geography and geography of the society-nature tradition. Though  
15 these three metaphors are by no means comprehensive, they do suggest the different  
16 ways in which geography proceeds in its project of making sense of reality.

17        Geography accomplishes this ontological project via an epistemological process;  
18 knowledge of space, place, and nature do not arise from thin air. This is the manner in  
19 which professional and substantive ethics in geography are connected, as process and  
20 product, context and content, are not comprehensible outside of the other. Yet the  
21 epistemological process of geography is far broader than what is typically subsumed  
22 under the category of "professional ethics." Minimally, this process involves a set of  
23 guiding concepts implemented via research and analytical techniques to generate  
24 knowledge, which has a certain form of representation and leads to specific social and

1 other implications. Guiding concepts include the metaphors of reality discussed above,  
2 which play an important general role in the constitution and reconstitution of  
3 geography's identity and thus provide a delimited range of appropriate inquiry in  
4 geographical research. Guiding concepts also include philosophical commitments as to  
5 how knowledge is to be produced and what kind of knowledge is worth producing,  
6 other important components of the constitution of geography. Research and analytical  
7 techniques are more specific and include methods of data collection and analysis, such  
8 as qualitative interviews, field reconnaissance, GIS-based spatial modeling, and so  
9 forth. Representation of research results by geographers commonly include mapping  
10 and writing, though other forms of representation are possible as well. Implications,  
11 whether intentional or unintentional, follow from the production of geographical  
12 knowledge; these may touch upon social, environmental, political, intellectual, and/or  
13 other worlds.

#### 14 **Ethics and geography's ontological project**

15 The metaphor of space provides perhaps the most familiar entry of geographers into  
16 substantive questions of ethics. Indeed, one of the strongest areas of attention among  
17 geographers has concerned spatial dimensions of social justice (Harvey 1973; 1993;  
18 Smith 1994; Gleeson 1996). This work builds on geographical analyses of spatial  
19 exclusion and control (Ogborn and Philo 1994; Sibley 1995), and considers questions  
20 such as geographical perspectives on some of its major philosophical figures (Clark  
21 1986), professional and personal responsibilities to spatially distant and less powerful  
22 others (Corbridge 1993; Corbridge 1998), immigration and social justice (Black 1996),  
23 and territorial justice (Boyne and Powell 1991).

1 Work by geographers on social justice is not, however, limited to its spatial  
2 dimensions. Geographers are, for instance, devoting increasing attention to  
3 environmental racism and justice, bridging the social justice paradigm to the metaphor  
4 of nature. Though contributions by geographers are barely evident in recent anthologies  
5 (e.g., Bryant 1995; Westra and Wenz 1995), an upswing of book-length publications  
6 (Pulido 1996; Low and Gleeson 1998), articles in mainstream journals (Bowen et al.  
7 1995), and indeed whole issues of geographical journals (see, for instance, *Antipode*  
8 28[2], *Urban Geography* 17[5]), attest to its burgeoning significance.

9 As another example of this interweaving of metaphors, David Smith has recently  
10 posed the question, "How far should we care?" (Smith 1998b), in an effort to work  
11 through the dual perspectives of ethics as spatial justice, where principles of  
12 indifference and universality are prioritized, and ethics as care, a relationally based  
13 ethics where one's families, communities, and other social groups of relational  
14 significance are the primary emphasis, where ethics and partiality, morality and  
15 passion, are not polar opposites. Smith's question clearly considers on the plane of  
16 ethics what many others have considered on the plane of epistemology: the tension  
17 between the objectivist, rationalistic metaphor of space, and the explicitly perspectival,  
18 embodied metaphor of place (Tuan 1977; Buttimer and Seamon 1980; Entrikin 1991;  
19 Sack 1992).

20 Place is, of course, already a significant category in the works of Sibley and others  
21 noted above. It is perhaps best exemplified, however, in work on "moral geographies,"  
22 which could loosely be translated as thick descriptions of the moral features of place. To  
23 call this work "descriptive ethics" is missing something, however, as place-based ethical  
24 inquiry may be closer to the mark of understanding human morality than its placeless  
25 equivalents commonly in abundance in more abstract normative and metaethical

1 inquiry (Walzer 1994; O'Neill 1996: 68). Indeed, though geographical work in moral  
2 geographies and other questions of ethics has shied away from an explicitly normative  
3 and/or metaethical focus, the fact that geographers have attended to questions such as  
4 universalist versus particularist ethics suggests the relative ease with which place-based  
5 geographical analysis lends itself to addressing these more abstract issues (e.g.,  
6 Corbridge 1993).

7       The concept of place itself has been invoked by geographers in order to critically  
8 reflect on the problematic objectification of subjective community or regional values  
9 (Entrikin 1991: 60-83), as well as to ground the moral context of production and  
10 consumption in advanced industrial societies (Sack 1992: 177-205). Indeed, the moral  
11 realm is deeply implicated in the work of many humanist geographers on place—of  
12 which the example of Yi-Fu Tuan is perhaps most prominent (Tuan 1974; 1989; 1993).  
13 But the sheer range of recent work on moral geographies makes the important collective  
14 point that the diverse places geographers study are inescapably normative, that  
15 normativity is not so much something to be added on to place as to be teased out of it.  
16 Some instances of this work include the explorations of Jackson and others on moral  
17 order in the city (Jackson 1984; Driver 1988), “moral locations” of nineteenth century  
18 Portsmouth (Ogborn and Philo 1994), the moral geography of reformatories (Ploszajska  
19 1994), the moral geography of the Norfolk Broadlands (Matless 1994), the moral  
20 discourse of climate (Livingstone 1991), and the “moral geography of the everyday”  
21 (Birdsall 1996). Though the term has had some use outside of geography (e.g., Shapiro  
22 1994; cf. Slater 1997 for a related geographical perspective), it would be a gross  
23 overstatement to suggest that, by means of moral geographies, geographers have made  
24 their indelible mark on how ethics ought to be encountered. Though Kant would  
25 perhaps be perplexed at this outcome, geographers are rather used to intellectual

1 anonymity; the question is whether the important voice geographers have to add on the  
2 ethics of place will be heard outside of the discipline.

3 The metaphor of nature (understood as biophysical environment) is evident in much  
4 of what was presented above, but as a primary focus of ethical interest among  
5 geographers it has not enjoyed such diffuse attention as social justice and moral  
6 geographies. One important reason is that the vast majority of work by geographers  
7 under this metaphorical trajectory is largely physical and life science-based, and as such  
8 rarely if ever entertains questions of human ethics (one important recent exception  
9 being a forum on ethics in environmental science in Annals of the Association of  
10 American Geographers [88:2]). Is this lack of attention by physical geographers to ethics  
11 justified? At the level of their immediate topics of interest, perhaps: fluvial  
12 geomorphology and microclimatology involve processes that have important human  
13 impacts and arise in part from human drivers, but in and of themselves there is  
14 arguably little ground for ethical reflection. Yet the historical process by which science  
15 decoupled from explicit attention to morality is well-rehearsed elsewhere, and as such  
16 suggests that this immediate detachment of physical geography from ethics is as much  
17 a particular historical result as some inevitable corollary of its subject-matter.

18 Nonetheless, there has been a rising interest among geographers in environmental  
19 ethics (Proctor 1998c). In addition to the literature cited above on environmental racism  
20 and justice, there is ample supplemental evidence of this interest. The inaugural issue of  
21 Philosophy and Geography, for instance, was devoted to environmental ethics (Light  
22 and Smith 1997). Whole books now are arising which engage with questions of nature  
23 and morality in significant ways (Simmons 1993; Harvey 1996).

24 Work in this area is predictably diffuse, though not at all limited to the recent past,  
25 as suggested for instance in the writings of Reclus (Clark 1997). Some geographers have

1 situated questions of environmental ethics in the context of culturally-based ideas of  
2 nature (Simmons 1993), while others have discussed the spatial scale dependency of  
3 optimal formulations of environmental ethics (Reed and Slaymaker 1993), and still  
4 others have critically reviewed the values underlying environmental movements  
5 (O'Riordan 1981; Lewis 1992), at times rejecting them in favor of less sociopolitically  
6 naive alternatives (Pepper 1993). Some have looked at environmental ethics from a  
7 cross-cultural perspective (Wescoat 1997), while others have engaged with the  
8 modernist and anti-modernist underpinnings of western environmental thought  
9 (Gandy 1997). Indeed, the diverse linkages geographers have drawn between social  
10 theory and environmental ideology and ethics (Proctor 1995; Gandy 1996) are broadly  
11 suggestive of the important contributions geographers can make.

12 As suggested above, perhaps the most interesting substantive work by geographers  
13 on ethics transcends the boundaries between the metaphors of space, place, and nature.  
14 Indeed, the key contribution geographers have to make arises from the diverse  
15 metaphors of reality they invoke; hence critical tensions between universals and  
16 difference, justice and care, can be thoughtfully entertained by geographers, given the  
17 solid establishment of the discipline upon the metaphors of space and place. This  
18 strength in metaphorical diversity is also evident in the contribution geographers can  
19 make to environmental ethics; here, for instance, the problem of how to resolve conflicts  
20 between social and natural goods can be meaningfully addressed, as geographers have  
21 a foot planted in both nature and culture. The diversity of geographical imaginations  
22 cast upon this world thus offers an important point of beginning for geographers to  
23 make a real contribution to moral discourse.

## 1 **Ethics and geography's epistemological process**

2 Geographical knowledge does not arise in a vacuum. The statements geographers  
3 make about space, place and nature come out of a particular process, of which four  
4 sequential steps were noted above. The first step, guiding concepts, draws upon the  
5 metaphors that inform geography's ontological project, as well as intrinsic or extrinsic  
6 epistemological rules (e.g., universalizability or the lack thereof) that govern the  
7 application of these metaphors to knowledge-building. This discussion is well-  
8 rehearsed in the literature: the critique of positivism over the last several decades, for  
9 instance, is in large a part a critique of how particular ontological and epistemological  
10 assumptions associated with positivism have constrained the kinds and implications of  
11 knowledge arising from geographical research (Gregory 1979). Though this critical  
12 literature does not go by the self-ascription of "ethics," nonetheless its reasoned  
13 normative pronouncements are of similar intent. Further inquiry into the ways in which  
14 basic ontological and epistemological assumptions shape geographical research in  
15 ethically-significant ways is needed.

16 One of the most familiar areas of ethical inquiry in geography involves research and  
17 analytical techniques, ranging from cartography (Harley 1991; Monmonier 1991;  
18 Rundstrom 1993) to remote sensing and geographic information systems (Wasowski  
19 1991; Lake 1993; Curry 1994; Crampton 1995). The act of research itself, and the  
20 consideration of the role of the researcher vis-à-vis the research subject(s), has also been  
21 a popular subject of inquiry (e.g., Eyles and Smith 1988; England 1994). Another area  
22 where important work has been done concerns how geographical knowledge is  
23 represented, in realms ranging from cartography (see above) to academic publication  
24 (Brunn 1989; Curry 1991) to education (Havelberg 1990; Kirby 1991; Smith 1995). Less

1 work has considered implications of geographical research, though explicit attention  
2 has been paid to areas with direct social significance such as planning (Entrikin 1994),  
3 and it should be noted that some of the most provocative publications by geographers  
4 have taken seriously the implications of geographical research as a starting-point for  
5 reconfiguring geography (e.g., Kropotkin 1885; Harvey 1974). Indeed, ethical issues  
6 become more focused as one moves from a particular geographical concept to its  
7 technical implementation and finally to its application. For instance, conceiving space as  
8 an isotropic surface appears innocent enough until one builds a GIS upon this naive  
9 assumption for the purpose of, say, specifying social service facility location. This  
10 example suggests also the interrelation of ethical issues across the continuum of  
11 geography's epistemological process, and points out the severe limitations in a  
12 "professional ethics" circumscribed solely to questions of research data and publication  
13 (though see Brunn 1998; Hay 1998 for recent theoretically and historically rich accounts  
14 of professional ethics in geography).

## 15 THE ESSAYS

16 What follows include eighteen original essays contributed by geographers on ethics.  
17 The volume is structured into the themes of space, place, nature, and knowledge  
18 following the framework above; each section is preceded by a short introductory  
19 summary of the component essays and some major issues they jointly raise. The volume  
20 ends with a conclusion by David M. Smith which offers further reflections on these four  
21 themes, linking them to related issues in geography and ethics.

22 Yet as already noted, what is interesting about geographical work is often the ways  
23 in which these themes are joined—indeed, some would argue that this is a defining  
24 feature of geography. The inherent multidimensionality of the essays comprising this



1 volume indeed presented the editors with an organizational challenge: do we categorize  
2 them a posteriori according to the prevalent theme they address, or do we simply  
3 present them as they are, without some imposed (and admittedly modernist)  
4 Procrustean structure? We have chosen the former approach as a manner of providing  
5 some conceptual clarification on the potentially limitless ways in which geography and  
6 ethics interweave, as well as to suggest the flavor and diversity of each of these themes  
7 as exemplified in their representative essays. Some clearly focus on their given theme;  
8 others invoke it only implicitly. Some themes (e.g., the production of geographical  
9 knowledge) are “tighter” than others. We assume the reader will not expect an overly  
10 tidy match between essay and theme: we gave each author free reign to explore the  
11 confluence of geography and ethics, and thus all stand on their own as well as  
12 contribute to a given thematic conversation. The real work of real geographers is far too  
13 many-layered to collapse entirely onto such a simple rubric.

14 There are other commonalities among essays the reader will detect that are not  
15 emphasized in this fourfold structure. Some overarching commonalities combine  
16 geographical themes: hence, for example, the tension between space and place comes  
17 out as a tension between universalism and particularism, thin and thick moralities,  
18 justice and caring. Other commonalities speak more to the broad relationship between  
19 ethics, reality and knowledge. For instance, the well-known “is-ought” problem  
20 surfaces in discussions of ethnicity and morality, the natural as good, and knowledge as  
21 power; and some essays speak explicitly of the ontological and epistemological  
22 embeddedness of ethics. Some commonalities involve method: many essays adopt a  
23 case method of argumentation, whereas others proceed more in the abstract. And, of  
24 course there is a strong resonance among all essays as to the geographical  
25 embeddedness of ethics, an argument made implicitly or explicitly that geography

1 matters in finding clarifications of, or solutions to, ethical questions. The most accurate  
2 organizational motif for these essays would thus probably be some sort of analogue to  
3 hyperspace, in which each essay were linked to essays related to it in all the ways noted  
4 above; this approach, however, is clearly far more suited to electronic than hardcopy  
5 publication!

6 The volume's diverse essays speak not only to a multitude of ways to consider ethics  
7 from geographical perspectives; they also speak to some flexibility in what ethics is all  
8 about. Here, several key tensions are important. One tension—particularly exemplified  
9 in comparing the essays on knowledge and ethics with the other essays—concerns the  
10 difference between ethics as “thinking about caring” and ethics as “caring”: in the first  
11 sense (much as ethics was defined above), being ethical involves intellectual reflection  
12 on moral matters, and in the second, being ethical involves doing the right (at least the  
13 best possible) thing. The net effect of these essays is that both are honored as key in any  
14 authentic project of ethics: an excess of thinking-without-doing, or an excess of caring-  
15 without-thinking, would otherwise result. Another key tension (highlighted especially  
16 in the important essay by Ó Tuathail) considers the valence of any project labeled  
17 “ethics”: are its moral implications ultimately positive or, viewed in a far more negative  
18 sense, can projects of this nature impose some political project, veiled in moral guise,  
19 upon others? Though most will probably agree that the kinds of moral reflection  
20 exemplified in these essays are by and large positive in their implications, any project of  
21 ethics such as that comprising this volume that is mindless of its potential coercive  
22 power is dangerous.

23 A final, important, note. There are many fine authors and ideas that made this  
24 volume; there are many more that did not. We regret, for instance, the nonparticipation  
25 of physical geographers in our volume, yet there is no necessary reason why they

1 should be excluded (Proctor 1998b); and though we made a point to encourage balance  
2 of gender, seniority, subspecialty, philosophical predisposition, and other differences  
3 among us, still many sectors are inadequately represented. The editors particularly  
4 regret the absence of a chapter with an explicitly feminist stance, but take comfort from  
5 the reflection of feminist perspectives in some of the essays as well as in the Conclusion,  
6 and from the focus on feminist ethics in other recent geographical publications. Ethics  
7 in geography is simply too rich at this moment to be fully captured in one volume, for  
8 the simple reason that geography is far richer than that suggested by its representative  
9 on that distant planet visited by the Little Prince on his journey. If this volume is a  
10 testimony to that fact, it is also in its finitude an indication of the rich work yet to be  
11 written as geographers continue their journeys on this moral terrain.

## 12 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

13 I acknowledge the helpful comments of Caroline Nagel, David M. Smith, and two  
14 anonymous reviewers on an earlier draft. I also acknowledge kind permission from the  
15 Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) to use portions of  
16 a recently-published review article on geography and ethics in this essay (Proctor  
17 1998a).

## 18 REFERENCES

- 19 Bauman, Z. (1994) Postmodern ethics, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- 20 Benedict, R. (1934) 'A defense of moral relativism', Journal of General Psychology 10:  
21 59-82.
- 22 Benhabib, S. (1992) Situating the self: Gender, community and postmodernism in  
23 contemporary ethics, Cambridge: Polity Press.

- 1 Billinge, M., Gregory, D., Martin, R. L. (1984) Recollections of a revolution: Geography  
2 as spatial science, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- 3 Birdsall, S. S. (1996) 'Regard, respect, and responsibility: Sketches for a moral geography  
4 of the everyday', Annals of the Association of American Geographers 86: 619-629.
- 5 Black, R. (1996) 'Immigration and social justice: towards a progressive European  
6 immigration policy?', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 21: 64-75.
- 7 Bowen, W. M., Salling, M. J., Haynes, K. E., Cyran, E. J. (1995) 'Toward environmental  
8 justice: Spatial equity in Ohio and Cleveland', Annals of the Association of  
9 American Geographers 85: 641-663.
- 10 Boyne, G., Powell, M. (1991) 'Territorial justice: A review of theory and evidence',  
11 Political Geography Quarterly 10: 263-281.
- 12 Brunn, S. D. (1989) 'Editorial: Ethics in word and deed.', Annals of the Association of  
13 American Geographers 79: iii-iv.
- 14 — (1998) 'Issues of social relevance raised by presidents of the Association of  
15 American Geographers: The first fifty years', Ethics, Place, and Environment 1: 77-  
16 92.
- 17 Bryant, B. (ed) (1995) Environmental justice: Issues, policies, and solutions Washington,  
18 D.C.: Island Press.
- 19 Buttimer, A. (1974) 'Values in geography' Association of American Geographers  
20 Resource Paper no. 24
- 21 — (1993) Geography and the human spirit, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.
- 22 Buttimer, A., Seamon, D. (1980) The human experience of space and place, New York:  
23 St. Martin's Press.
- 24 Clark, G. L. (1986) 'Making moral landscapes: John Rawls' original position', Political  
25 Geography Quarterly Supplement 5: 147-162.

- 1 Clark, J. (1997) 'The dialectical social geography of Elisée Reclus', in A. Light, J. M.  
2 Smith (ed.) Philosophy and geography I: Space, place, and environmental ethics,  
3 Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- 4 Corbridge, S. (1993) 'Marxisms, modernities and moralities: Development praxis and  
5 the claims of distant strangers', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 11:  
6 449-472.
- 7 — (1998) 'Development ethics: Distance, difference, plausibility', Ethics, Place, and  
8 Environment 1: 35-54.
- 9 Cosgrove, D. (1989) 'Models, description and imagination in geography', in B.  
10 MacMillan (ed.) Remodelling geography, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- 11 Crampton, J. (1995) 'The ethics of GIS', Cartography and Geographic Information  
12 Systems 22: 84-89.
- 13 Curry, M. R. (1991) 'On the possibility of ethics in geography: Writing, citing, and the  
14 construction of intellectual property', Progress in Human Geography 15: 125-147.
- 15 — (1994) 'Geographic information systems and the inevitability of ethical  
16 inconsistency', in J. Pickles (ed.) Ground truth, New York: Guilford Press.
- 17 Davis, N. A. (1993) 'Contemporary deontology', in P. Singer (ed.) A companion to  
18 ethics, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- 19 de Saint-Exupéry, A. (1943) The little prince, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.
- 20 Driver, F. (1988) 'Moral geographies: Social science and the urban environment in mid-  
21 nineteenth century England', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 13:  
22 275-287.
- 23 England, K. V. L. (1994) 'Getting personal: reflexivity, positionality, and feminist  
24 research', Professional Geographer 46: 80-89.

- 1 Entrikin, J. N. (1991) The betweenness of place: Towards a geography of modernity,  
2 Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 3 — (1994) 'Moral geographies: The planner in place', Geography Research Forum 14:  
4 113-119.
- 5 Eyles, J., Smith, D. M. (ed) (1988) Qualitative methods in human geography Oxford:  
6 Polity Press.
- 7 Feldman, F. (1978) Introductory ethics, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- 8 Gandy, M. (1996) 'Crumbling land: The postmodernity debate and the analysis of  
9 environmental problems', Progress in Human Geography 20: 23-40.
- 10 — (1997) 'Ecology, modernity, and the intellectual legacy of the Frankfurt School', in  
11 A. Light, J. M. Smith (ed.) Philosophy and geography I: Space, place, and  
12 environmental ethics, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- 13 Geertz, C. (1989) 'Anti anti-relativism', in M. Krausz (ed.) Relativism, Notre Dame,  
14 Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.
- 15 Gilligan, C. (1982) In a different voice, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University  
16 Press.
- 17 Gleeson, B. (1996) 'Justifying justice', Area 28: 229-234.
- 18 Goodin, R. E. (1993) 'Utility and the good', in P. Singer (ed.) A companion to ethics,  
19 Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- 20 Gregory, D. (1979) Ideology, science, and human geography, New York: St. Martin's  
21 Press.
- 22 — (1994) 'Geographical imagination', in R. J. Johnston, D. Gregory, D. M. Smith (ed.)  
23 The dictionary of human geography, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- 24 Harley, J. B. (1991) 'Can there be a cartographic ethics?', Cartographic Perspectives 10:  
25 9-16.

- 1 Harvey, D. (1973) Social justice and the city, London: Edwin Arnold.
- 2 ——— (1974) 'What kind of geography for what kind of public policy?', Transactions of  
3 the Institute of British Geographers 63: 18-24.
- 4 ——— (1993) 'Class relations, social justice and the politics of difference', in M. Keith, S.  
5 Pile (ed.) Place and the politics of identity, New York: Routledge.
- 6 ——— (1996) Justice, nature and the geography of difference, Oxford: Blackwell.
- 7 Havelberg, G. (1990) 'Ethics as an educational aim in geography teaching', Geographie  
8 und Schule 12: 5-15.
- 9 Hay, A. M. (1995) 'Concepts of equity, fairness and justice in geographical studies',  
10 Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 20: 500-508.
- 11 Hay, I. (1998) 'Making moral imaginations. Research ethics, pedagogy, and professional  
12 human geography', Ethics, Place, and Environment 1: 55-76.
- 13 Hume, D. (1978) A treatise of human nature, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 14 Jackson, P. (1984) 'Social disorganization and moral order in the city', Transactions of  
15 the Institute of British Geographers 9: 168-180.
- 16 Johnston, R. J. (1986) Philosophy and human geography: An introduction to  
17 contemporary approaches, London: Edward Arnold.
- 18 Kirby, A. (1991) 'On ethics and power in higher education', Journal of Geography in  
19 Higher Education 15: 75-77.
- 20 Kropotkin, P. (1885) 'What geography ought to be', The Nineteenth Century 18: 940-956.
- 21 Lake, R. W. (1993) 'Planning and applied geography: positivism, ethics, and geographic  
22 information systems', Progress in Human Geography 17: 404-413.
- 23 Lewis, M. W. (1992) Green delusions: An environmentalist critique of radical  
24 environmentalism, Durham: Duke University Press.

- 1 Light, A., Smith, J. M. (ed) (1997) Philosophy and geography I: Space, place, and  
2 environmental ethics Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- 3 Livingstone, D. (1991) 'The moral discourse of climate: Historical considerations on  
4 race, place and virtue', Journal of Historical Geography 17: 413-434.
- 5 — (1992) The geographical tradition: Episodes in the history of a contested discipline,  
6 Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- 7 Low, N., Gleeson, B. (1998) Justice, society and nature: An exploration of political  
8 ecology, London: Routledge Publishers.
- 9 Matless, D. (1994) 'Moral geography in broadland', Ecumene 1: 127-156.
- 10 May, J. A. (1970) Kant's concept of geography and its relation to recent geographical  
11 thought, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- 12 Mitchell, B., Draper, D. (1982) Relevance and ethics in geography, London: Longman.
- 13 Monmonier, M. (1991) 'Ethics and map design. Six strategies for confronting the  
14 traditional one-map solution', Cartographic Perspectives 10: 3-8.
- 15 NAS Committee on Science, E., and Public Policy, (1995) On being a scientist:  
16 Responsible conduct in research, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- 17 O'Neill, J. (1993) 'Ethics', in W. Outhwaite, T. Bottomore (ed.) The Blackwell dictionary  
18 of twentieth-century social thought, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- 19 O'Neill, O. (1996) Toward justice and virtue: A constructive account of practical  
20 reasoning, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 21 O'Riordan, T. (1981) Environmentalism, London: Pion.
- 22 Ogborn, M., Philo, C. (1994) 'Soldiers, sailors and moral locations in nineteenth-century  
23 Portsmouth', Area 26: 221-231.
- 24 Outhwaite, W. (1993) 'Values', in W. Outhwaite, T. Bottomore (ed.) The Blackwell  
25 Dictionary of twentieth-century social thought, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.



- 1 Peet, R., Thrift, N. (ed) (1989) New models in geography: The political-economy  
2 perspective London: Unwin Hyman.
- 3 Pepper, D. (1993) Eco-Socialism: From deep ecology to social justice, London:  
4 Routledge.
- 5 Ploszajska, T. (1994) 'Moral landscapes and manipulated spaces: Gender, class and  
6 space in Victorian reformatory schools', Journal of Historical Geography 20: 413-429.
- 7 Proctor, J. D. (1995) 'Whose nature? The contested moral terrain of ancient forests', in  
8 W. Cronon (ed.) Uncommon ground: Toward reinventing nature, New York: W.W.  
9 Norton.
- 10 — (1998a) 'Ethics in geography: Giving moral form to the geographical imagination',  
11 Area 30: 8-18.
- 12 — (1998b) 'Expanding the scope of science and ethics: A response to Harman,  
13 Harrington, and Cervený's "Balancing scientific and ethical values in environmental  
14 science"', Annals of the Association of American Geographers 88: 290-296.
- 15 — (1998c) 'Geography, paradox, and environmental ethics', Progress in Human  
16 Geography 22: 234-255.
- 17 Pulido, L. (1996) Environmentalism and economic justice: Two Chicano struggles in the  
18 Southwest, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- 19 Rawls, J. (1971) A theory of justice, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University  
20 Press.
- 21 Reed, M. G., Slaymaker, O. (1993) 'Ethics and sustainability: a preliminary perspective',  
22 Environment and Planning A 25: 723-739.
- 23 Rose, G. (1993) Feminism and geography: The limits of geographical knowledge,  
24 Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- 1 Rundstrom, R. A. (1993) 'The role of ethics, mapping, and the meaning of place in  
2 relations between Indians and whites in the United States', Cartographica 30: 21-28.
- 3 Sack, R. D. (1992) Place, modernity, and the consumer's world: A relational framework  
4 for geographical analysis, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 5 — (1997) Homo Geographicus: A framework for action, awareness, and moral  
6 concern, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- 7 Sayer, A., Storper, M. (1997) 'Guest editorial essay—Ethics unbound: For a normative  
8 turn in social theory', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 15: 1-17.
- 9 Shapiro, M. J. (1994) 'Moral geographies and the ethics of post-sovereignty', Public  
10 Culture 6: 479-502.
- 11 Sibley, D. (1995) Geographies of exclusion: Society and difference in the west, London:  
12 Routledge.
- 13 Simmons, I. G. (1993) Interpreting nature: Cultural constructions of the environment,  
14 London: Routledge.
- 15 Singer, P. (1993) 'Introduction', in P. Singer (ed.) A companion to ethics, Oxford:  
16 Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- 17 Slater, D. (1997) 'Spatialities of power and postmodern ethics: Rethinking geopolitical  
18 encounters', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 15: 55-72.
- 19 Smith, D. M. (1994) Geography and social justice, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- 20 — (1995) 'Moral teaching in geography', Journal of Geography in Higher Education  
21 19: 271-283.
- 22 — (1997) 'Geography and ethics: A moral turn?', Progress in human geography 21:  
23 583-590.
- 24 — (1998a) 'Geography and moral philosophy: Some common ground', Ethics, Place,  
25 and Environment 1: 7-34.

- 1 — (1998b) 'How far should we care? On the spatial scope of beneficence', Progress in  
2 Human Geography 22: 15-38.
- 3 Tuan, Y.-F. (1974) Topophilia: A study of environmental perception, attitudes, and  
4 values, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- 5 — (1977) Space and place: The perspective of experience, Minneapolis: University of  
6 Minnesota Press.
- 7 — (1989) Morality and imagination: Paradoxes of progress, Madison: The University  
8 of Wisconsin Press.
- 9 — (1993) Passing strange and wonderful: Aesthetics, nature, and culture,  
10 Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- 11 Wacquant, L. J. D. (1993) 'Positivism', in W. Outhwaite, T. Bottomore (ed.) The  
12 Blackwell Dictionary of twentieth-century social thought, Oxford: Blackwell  
13 Publishers.
- 14 Walzer, M. (1994) Thick and thin: Moral argument at home and abroad, Notre Dame:  
15 University of Notre Dame Press.
- 16 Wasowski, R. J. (1991) 'Some ethical aspects of international satellite remote sensing',  
17 Photogrammetric Engineering and Remote Sensing 57: 41-48.
- 18 Wescoat, J. L., Jr. (1997) 'Muslim contributions to geography and environmental ethics:  
19 The challenges of comparison and pluralism', in A. Light, J. M. Smith (ed.)  
20 Philosophy and geography I: Space, place, and environmental ethics, Lanham,  
21 Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- 22 Westra, L., Wenz, P. S. (ed) (1995) Faces of environmental racism: Confronting issues of  
23 global justice Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- 24 Whatmore, S. (1997) 'Dissecting the autonomous self: Hybrid cartographies for a  
25 relational ethics', Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 15: 37-53.

- 1 Wood, A. (1993) 'Marx against morality', in P. Singer (ed.) A companion to ethics,
- 2 Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- 3
- 4